

Manna from Hell

A Comment

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Israel, for reasons its rulers claim to be unable to divine, is beset by enemies—enemies, conveniently, much of whose territories about the territory assigned Israel by the 1948 UN General Assembly resolution that led to its creation. This makes the territories adjoining Israel available for conquest and occupation to “prevent attacks on Israel” from them, but whose function as a buffer zone is then immediately negated by the establishment of Jewish “settlements”—more Israel, as it were—throughout the seized territories.

Whether in reaction to these, or other entirely imagined affronts, people in these threatening—and threatened—zones near Israel have displayed in recent decades a propensity occasionally to launch missiles at such parts of Israel as lie within their (short) range. The Hezbollah in southern Lebanon has launched over this period some dozens of Katyusha rockets across their border with the Jewish state, most harmlessly missing any and all targets, and a few doing some physical harm to persons and property. From blockaded Gaza, the assault has been concomitantly feebler, being limited to a few dozen puny homemade sugar-powered “rockets” that also have disturbed the peace in adjacent parts of Israel even to the point of killing a few spectacularly unlucky souls who turned out to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The circumstance has been a boon to that apparatus in Israel (there’s one in every government) that feeds upon the fears and vengeful inclinations of the Israeli population. The unsteady pitter-patter of genuinely hate-fueled missiles impacting Israel’s turf has not only enabled the Israeli government to impose and tighten a pseudo-wartime harness on the energies and purposes of its subjects, but has further excused a campaign of aggression against neighboring peoples and their works under the guise of “self-defense,” spiced here and there with a bit of understandable, if usually misdirected, retribution.

Ambitious governments everywhere could, and no doubt do, envy this situation that repeatedly bolsters the potency of the Israeli state. Here, at no (*ex ante*) cost to the government, continual, if actually sparse, incitements descend like Manna from Hell on the Israeli population to seek from their government succor, revenge, and possibly eventually relief. Until 9/11, statists in the United States could only look on with envy, with Canadians having no such bone to pick with the US (they repelled its territorial incursions), and Mexicans too busy slaughtering each other in contention for the lucrative business of supplying Americans with drugs declared illegal by the American government.



Manna raining from heaven on the Israelites (Exodus 16)

By Anonymous (Maciejowski Bible) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the Public Domain.

That all changed on September 11, 2001. On the morning of that day, a wondrous rain of missiles descended on American territory—upon American icons, even—to water the evil flower of state power in the world’s only superpower. This rain, of course, has been portrayed as airliners full of innocent (American) victims, causing the deaths and dismemberments of still more (mostly American) victims in those American icons, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The effect was instantaneous and gratifying—the more-so in view of the fact that the Twin Towers actually collapsed, which may or may not have been in the expectations of the perpetrators, whoever they were. America (like Israel) was At War.

At War with whom, or what? Here, creativity was called for, as creativity is so frequently and urgently called for in the wars of propaganda and the propagandas of war. The objects of war came forth with uncanny readiness: the enemies of Israel, however they may have been described in other terms that substituted for Israel the identity of its faithful and fearsome sponsor, the United States.

When the victim of an attack lashes out against an amorphous attacker, it strikes whomever and whatever it can reach in its vengeful thrashings. When the victim is the United States, it can reach any target it chooses, though the choice must be mediated by suspicions, affections, assumptions, (anticipated) consequences, (allegable) evidence, and ... pivotal suasions insinuated by interested third parties, who might for any of various reasons favor particular targets.

The point, is War. Israel has characterized its unopposable attack on Gaza of 2008-2009 as a "war," and in the sense that it was a response to a feeble, barely annoying attack, it was that. But presented as a War, it permitted both the enlistment of the Israeli people in its prosecution, and the wooing of international sympathy in its support. The first may or may not have worked. The second did not work, except in America, where, by contrast with the rest of the world, it did work.

And War is what the regime in America needed, in 2001, as any regime anywhere needs it at most-any time. And War came, by what agency will probably never be known, but it came, as in Israel, from the sky, but unlike in Israel: (a) it hit central, densely populated targets, accurately; and (b) its origin, unless dubious official pronouncements are to be credited, is ultimately unknown.

No matter. War was to hand, and it has in all the time since well served the regime that reserves to itself exclusively the prerogative of fighting the superpower's Wars. The plural of war is apposite: first came the invasion and occupation of the (unpopular, Muslim) country in which the putative (unpopular, Muslim) mastermind of the attacks of 9/11 had supposedly hidden, Afghanistan. Then came another war, against an (unpopular, Muslim) country that stood (falsely) accused of developing and maintaining weapons of mass destruction with which to attack nearby allies of America, of which there was one that was: (a) not Muslim; and (b) not a source of any commodity or good, such as oil, that America required enormous quantities of every day for the maintenance of its citizens' lifestyle. That ally was Israel, to protect which America duly invaded and occupied Iraq.

Meantime, with the PATRIOT Act, the new Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration, and massive increases in military spending, the power exercised by the American government over its threatened people roared ahead, smartly closing the gap between it and the government of the Promised Land. In the Home of the Brave, fear-stricken Americans stampeded into government shelters only to discover, too late, that they were much more nearly stockades than refuges.

The asymmetry of the victims' responses to their respective missile showers tellingly illuminates the deadly technological partnership rotating on the Washington-Tel Aviv axis. Although the US in particular has displayed a fiery appetite for launching Hawkeye and other such missiles from airborne "platforms," neither it nor Israel has deployed land- or sea-launched missiles in their responses. Both make extensive use of manned aircraft in their assaults, and both make liberal use of "boots on the ground," though Israel has displayed restraint since its misadventures in Lebanon last time around.

Israel long led the United States in the development and use of unmanned aircraft, but for the moment appears to have passed the baton of using drones as weapons platforms to its tame behemoth, which uses them lavishly, to the point of extrajudicially murdering even its own citizens, as yet in places distant from the Secure Homeland.

Skipping over little pot boilers like Libya, Somalia, and now Uganda, the agendas of the rampaging American elephant and its tiny Middle Eastern mahout have finally, if not inevitably, converged. Nuclear and other weapons-of-mass-destruction plots have been discovered once again, and in the country literally next door to the still-occupied one that America's diminutive controller last designated for subjugation.

The honor of launching the attack on Iran, long since prefigured on the fronts of economic sanctions and invidious propaganda initiatives, seems at present to grace the sleek fighter-bombers of the Israeli Air Force. By law, America stands at the ready with reserve oceans of blood and money to support the Middle East's "only democracy" as it launches yet another in its endless succession of wars of defense. The (unpopular, Muslim) non-democracies continue to tremble, if not with hearts full of peace and love, at least non-aggressively.

Iran, of course, is Muslim. Although its unpopularity goes back to the 1979 overthrow of the Western-installed and -controlled puppet Shah and the Occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran, that unpopularity has been much enhanced in recent years by the ever-intensifying propaganda campaign against it that so ominously reprises the lies about its unfortunate predecessor, Iraq.

If the very inconvenient history of sanctions and demonizing propaganda culminating in armed attack repeats itself in the belligerent democracies' next occasion for destructive intervention, the consequences for the attackers and the world at large threaten to be far more serious than they were when America crushed little Iraq.

But not to worry—both attackers have the means, if they choose, to knock Iran flat with the press of a button. Along with a vast arsenal of every kind of weapon of mass destruction imaginable, America and Israel both have nukes.

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